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TAGS: [PARM](#) [KNNP](#) [PREL](#) [AORC](#) [IAEA](#) [KZ](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: IAEA/BOARD: KAZAKHS NERVOUS ABOUT CONTESTING SYRIA
FOR MESA SEAT

REF: UNVIE 314 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Gregory L.Schulte for reasons 1.4 b and d

¶1. (S) Summary: Kazakh Ambassador Abdrakhmanov expressed some reluctance in a discussion with Ambassador Schulte on July 7 to contest the Syrian candidacy for the open MESA seat at the Board of Governors. He reported that Syria was adamant about its candidacy, and claimed Arab/MESA support, including Kuwait, UAE, Qatar, Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon. Kazakhstan wanted 100 percent assurance of success if it is to put itself forward as a candidate but would make a final decision by July 20. Ambassador Schulte encouraged Kazakhstan to submit its candidacy and call Syria's bluff even if it came to a GC vote, though convincing Syria to back down and settling the issue within MESA would be optimal. Ambassador Schulte agreed to approach Arab counterparts to underline U.S. opposition to Syria's candidacy. However, Abdrakhmanov indicated that Kazakhstan did not want direct U.S. lobbying on its behalf. In follow-up discussions, Algerian Ambassador advised that the U.S. could influence Arab states in MESA despite an Arab League decision earlier in the year to support Syria. When approached on July 7, UAE and Qatar Ambassadors were non-committal the Kuwaiti Ambassador was inclined toward Syria. Mission recommends demarches in key MESA/Arab group capitals to influence Syria to withdraw or support an alternative. End Summary.

¶2. (S) Kazakh Ambassador Abdrakhmanov expressed some reluctance to contest Syria's Board candidacy for the MESA group in a discussion with Ambassador Schulte on July 7. He had just returned from consultations in Astana. Abdrakhmanov related that in a June 25 meeting Syrian Ambassador Khattab had been adamant about Syria's Board candidacy. Given this, he feared Kazakhstan was not in a position to fight if Syria continues to pursue a Board seat. Khattab was surprised by Kazakhstan's approach, insisted that Syria had put forward its candidacy first, and would fight for a Board seat. Syria claimed to have the support of the UAE, Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar and Lebanon, as well as that of the Arab League. Other MESA members were neutral, including MESA Chair India and Pakistan. Central Asian support was assured but not sufficient, and the MESA group could be split in two. Abdrakhmanov also assessed that the final decision may lie not with the MESA group but with the GC, where a Plenary vote would require broader support.

¶3. (S) If Kazakhstan puts its candidacy forward, it wants to be confident of success, he explained. Abdrakhmanov gave an informal deadline of July 20 for a decision, stipulating that

a Kazakh candidacy should be announced at least two months prior to the General Conference. However, Kazakhstan would not do so unless 100 percent sure of success. He cited Kazakhstan's positive record of achievement in the nuclear field, including recent joint ventures with French and Japanese firms. In light of this record, Kazakhstan "cannot allow itself to be defeated." Abdrakhmanov also mentioned that Kazakhstan reserved the option of running for the Board in 2009-2010, presumably when it would be easier.

¶4. (S) Abdrakhmanov sought Ambassador Schulte's advice on tactics, particularly if a message could be sent to Damascus. Ambassador Schulte agreed that the best outcome would be for Syria to step aside. If Syria insisted, there would be a vote in the General Conference. Syria's clandestine nuclear activities would be an agenda item in the September Board and the U.S. and others think it would be inappropriate to have a country under investigation sitting on the Board. Abdrakhmanov asked about the results of the safeguards investigation, which Ambassador Schulte noted would take time. Ambassador Schulte further advised that Syria had to understand its candidacy would draw more negative attention while it was under investigation, and that it would lose a GC vote. He added that Syria could save face, having recently served on the Board, by stepping aside to give another MESA group member a chance.

¶5. (S) Ambassador Schulte encouraged Kazakhstan to soon put forward its candidacy in MESA and to call Syria's potential bluff. He offered to assist with individual MESA group members, and noted that the French EU Presidency and Japan could also be helpful in this regard. Abdrakhmanov

acknowledged that he could not accept Syrian claims of Arab support on face value and planned to consult with Algerian Ambassador Feroukhi (who is expected to become Board Chair) and the Moroccan Ambassador as chairman of the Arab Group. However, Abdrakhmanov underlined the fact that Kazakhstan did not want to appear unduly influenced by external powers (i.e. the U.S.) and noted unhelpful rumors that the U.S. had approached two MESA group members to encourage their candidacy for the Board. Ambassador Schulte agreed that any approach to MESA and Arab Group members would focus on Syria's candidacy (rather than U.S. advocacy of Kazakhstan). Abdrakhmanov still hoped that Syria could be persuaded to withdraw, and would indicate to Khattab that Kazakhstan was preparing to put forward its candidacy.

¶6. (C) In follow-up discussions with Ambassador Schulte on July 7, MESA/Arab Group Ambassadors were non-committal on support for Syria. Feroukhi acknowledged U.S. concerns and said she had tried unsuccessfully to talk Khattab out of running, but he was adamant. The Kazak Ambassador had also told her on July 7 that Kazakhstan would present its candidacy. Feroukhi confirmed to Ambassador Schulte that the Arab League had endorsed Syria's candidacy earlier in the year. However, she suggested the U.S. could influence the positions of MESA countries like UAE, Kuwait and Iraq and advised resolving this issue within the MESA group rather than at the GC, where Arab countries would be more likely to back Syria as a block. In a separate discussion, the Moroccan Ambassador and current Arab Group Chair denied that Syria had Arab group support. Ambassador Schulte also spoke with counterparts from Kuwait, UAE and Qatar on July 7. The Kuwaiti Ambassador insisted that "nothing was proven" against Syria and it would be hard to object to Syria's candidacy, but would report U.S. views to capital. The UAE Ambassador said he was not aware of his country's support for Syria. Qatar also would check with capital.

¶7. (S) Ambassador Schulte subsequently consulted with the Russian Charge, who agreed that Kazakhstan would be a good candidate but wanted to keep out of MESA deliberations.

¶8. (S) Comment: Although there is no formal deadline within MESA, and the Indian Chair has no immediate plans to call a meeting, time is not on our side. All other regional groups have announced their Board candidates, and the longer Syria

remains unopposed, the more entrenched their position. Kazakhstan is nervous and is consulting with everyone under the sun, including the Secretariat which counseled them to go ahead. We will continue to urge Kazakhstan to announce their candidacy and to advise the Arab Group against blind support for Syria. We cannot give Kazakhstan 100 percent assurance, but MESA group members should welcome this alternative. Mission recommends demarches to MESA group/ Arab capitals to underline U.S. opposition to Syria's candidacy and to encourage Damascus to withdraw its MESA candidacy (without mentioning or advocating the Kazakh alternative.) Convincing Syria that it is not in its interest to pursue a Board candidacy would be the best outcome. We can also enlist like-minded countries, particularly the UK and French EU Presidency, in this effort. End Comment.

SCHULTE